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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMEMBASSY, MANAGUA

272
DESP. NO.

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

January 12, 1954

REF

WBC

S/P

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SUBJECT: General Federico Ponce, former President of Guatemala, tells of plans to overthrow Guatemalan Government.

Twice within the last ten days General Federico Ponce, former President of Guatemala, accompanied by Mariano Amador, a Nicaraguan lumber dealer, has called on the Ambassador to tell of his plans to overthrow the present government of Guatemala. Mr. Amador accompanied him only as an interpreter, they both claimed.

General Ponce, describing himself as "still the legal president of Guatemala," said that he was secretly in touch with many Guatemalan army officers and "had an organization of about 10,000 in Guatemala City alone." While he said he did not want to disclose his plan in detail at this time, it included bombing the capitol and some army bases, then appearing in person amid, he thought, the cheers of the multitude.

One flaw in the plan, he admitted, was that he needed "several" bombers, their crews and the bombs, as well as rifles and machine guns. He did not have the money with which to buy them and, so far, had not sought a benefactor to supply them.

He had not spoken to President Somoza or anyone else, he said, and he was not working or coordinating his planning with any other Guatemalan exiles, whom he termed selfish opportunists. General Ponce said he alone had legal and moral rights to the Presidency. There were not, in his opinion, enough Guatemalan exiles to make a sizeable force, but he insisted that the Guatemalan people and most army officers were tired of the present regime and ready to revolt, though he was certain they would follow no one but him. His advantage was that he had spent 40 years with the Guatemalan armed forces and had a strong personal following.

Commenting on Arevalo's recent visit to Cuba, General Ponce said he had reason to believe that he went there "to make peace for the time being between the communists and Batista." He added that he thought the mission had been successful and that the communists would now "ease up" on the Cuban president. "The communists do not want difficulties in that area because they have other fish to fry," the General said.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

JAN 21 1954

REPORTER

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The newspaper Flecha today said General Ponce had just been released from treatment at the Baptist Hospital but was still in delicate health. The paper quoted him as saying he was tired of fighting and did not want to hear or talk of politics. La Flecha said he was going to Honduras but would return.

For the Ambassador:

Roland Welch
First Secretary of Embassy

cc: AmEmbassies Guatemala, Tegucigalpa,
San Salvador

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